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THE NEWSPAPER FOR MAIDSTONE, MALLING, LARKFIELD AND SURROUNDING VILLAGES



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CLASSIC BALLET FOR 2011

The fun and festivities of the holiday season continue well into 2011 in Maidstone as the Hazlitt Arts Centre welcomes a classic ballet in January.

Ballet Theatre UK will bring their new production of Cinderella down the cobbles of Earl Street for the first time. The show will also introduce audiences to a number of young and talented international dancers. Tickets are available online from £18 for the showing at 7.30pm on Saturday, January 29. Call the box office on 01622 758611 or for more information visit www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk.

■ BY JOE BILL & NICK AMES

BUOYANT traders have been doing big business in the new year as thousands of shoppers flocked to Maidstone for the post-Christmas sales.

Stores reported being jam-packed as bargain hunters splashed the cash.

Even the recent snow failed to dampen their enthusiasm – the only major problem was finding somewhere to park.

Maidstone's town centre manager Bill Moss was delighted with the boost in retail sales.

He said: "Recession, what recession? Maidstone town centre is having an exceptionally busy January sale as shoppers flock to the town to pick up some of the fantastic bargains currently on offer.

"Because of the snow shoppers were forced to delay their Christmas shopping until the last moment and it appears they have the appetite for more now that the snow has cleared.

"Both the Mall Chequers and Fremlin Walk shopping centres reported very busy car parks, and retailers reported bumper business as shoppers raced to beat the VAT increase introduced yesterday."

Staff at all major stores recorded brisk businesses and shoppers said they were looking to beat the increase in VAT.

A spokesman for price comparison website moneysupermarket.com said: "With one in five Brits asking for cash this Christmas, retailers are expecting a bumper post-Christmas period as people snap up bargains with their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

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OUT OF TOWN: Maidstone maternity services are to be moved to Pembury Hospital

MP to fight on as end of maternity unit is confirmed

■ BY JOE BILL

THE Health Secretary Andrew Lansley has confirmed that consultant-led maternity services will be discontinued at Maidstone Hospital.

Instead, expectant mothers from the county town will have to travel to the new Pembury Hospital.

Campaigners, including Maidstone and Weald MP Helen Grant, have fought the planned changes as they believe it could put lives at risk.

The Tory has already said she is appalled by the decision and says she will continue to fight it.

She said: "The email I have received from Andrew Lansley today on the future of women and children's services at Maidstone Hospital fails to address the fact local GPs vehemently oppose plans to downgrade maternity services at Maidstone and close the paediatric unit."

"I have written to request clarification of what was an opaque and ambiguous letter, but my interpreta-

tion is that the Secretary of State is allowing the trust to proceed with its plans. If that is indeed the case then I am appalled by what is a truly puzzling and irrational decision. It is not acceptable and I cannot support it."

"He has completely ignored his own fundamental criterion for local GP support in hospital reconfiguration decisions."

"The evidence of local GP opposition is overwhelming in this case."

The campaign group, known as MASH, met members of the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells Trust in a public meeting earlier this year to discuss the plans. It was obvious at the time that there was clear opposition to the move.

Ms Grant added: "The decision also runs contrary to the white paper placing GPs at the centre of our NHS, throwing the entire initiative into doubt."

"I am considering the position with Kent County Council and the MASH campaign team."

"I have also asked Mr Lansley to delay any implementation until such time as the GPs are in a position to review the situation themselves as NHS Commissioners."

Homeless given beds in extreme weather

THE spirit of Christmas was rife in Maidstone this year as 11 homeless people were given a roof over their heads during the severe bad weather.

Maidstone Borough Council worked with homelessness charity Porchlight to help as many street sleepers as possible to get out of the snow.

During the last two weeks the scheme has proved its worth housing the group who are used to sleeping rough in the town.

Regeneration chief, Cllr Malcolm Greer said: "We have developed a Severe Weather Bed and Breakfast Support Agreement to provide emergency accommodation to rough sleepers when night time temperatures are expected to be at or below zero degrees for three consecutive nights."

Fatal crash on M20

A FATAL car crash on the M20 just after Christmas has prompted a police appeal for witnesses.

On Monday, December 27, a car left the London-bound carriageway, crashing into a field between junctions 8 and 9 near Maidstone.

Emergency services raced to the scene at just after 1pm but the female driver was pronounced dead on arrival.

Kent Police have said that there were no other passengers in the car and no-one else was hurt.

The M20 was closed at junction 9 and traffic had to be diverted onto the A20 for a short time.

Anyone who witnessed the collision or has information has been asked to call 01622 798535.

Information wanted

A £2,000 reward for information is being offered by the victim of a theft after two quad bikes were stolen from his house.

Two men broke into the garage in Otham Street, Otham, on December 17, between 11.55pm and 12.30am, taking the two blue children's Falcon 90 quad bikes.

Both men were white and were wearing grey jogging bottoms and black hooded tops. One was wearing Nike trainers which had a white logo tick on the side.

Anyone with information should contact the police on 01795 419182 quoting reference CY/020013/10 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

Pubs to pay levy for policing

LATE night pubs and clubs could be forced to pay extra fees as the Government looks to make up money on policing binge drinkers.

Councils will have the right to ask establishments that operate after midnight to help pay for law enforcement as well as taxi marshals and street wardens.

The Home Office has released figures showing that 21 per cent of violent incidents occur near a pub or club, and that is why they are bringing in the "multiplier" charge for premises which sell alcohol.

The charge will be set on a sliding scale, and will range from a few hundred pounds for the smallest premises to £4,500 for the largest.

A spokesman for the Home Office said: "This will ensure that larger pubs and clubs contribute more to

the levy than restaurants and theatres which may serve alcohol, but are likely to have a smaller impact on late night crime."

The Government confirmed the Law and Order Fee plans after the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Bill got its second reading in the House of Commons last week.

But the Home Office was keen to say that the new law did not tar all establishments with the same brush, and that each nightspot will be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

Phil Thorley, co-owner of Kent based company Torley Taverns Ltd, is frustrated by the rules which could affect their pubs, clubs and hotels.

He said: "To me it just seems like a further tax. Our industry is already one of the most taxed in the country. When we buy, we are taxed, when we

retail, we are taxed. We pay high rates already, it is just another tax."

Councils will however be able to exempt hotels which only serve their own customers, and there are ways for pubs to avoid paying the full fee if they show efforts in reducing its impact on the community, such as becoming a member of watchdog schemes.

The Government also said "it hoped to avoid impacting on 'community pubs' by restricting the fees to establishments open after midnight".

Venues and businesses that want to avoid paying are allowed to change their opening hours.

Talking to the Guardian newspaper, Alcohol Concern chief, Don Shenker, backed the new plans, which could lower the cost of drink-related incidents to police.

Podgy puss joins vet's annual slimmers class

Competition to help restore fat Lady to health

■ BY JOE BILL

A FAT cat from Maidstone has been named among 11 supersized pets set to undergo a major PDSA fitness regime.

Six-year-old Lady is 65 per cent over her ideal body weight, topping the scales at a massive 8.3kg, when she should weigh close to 5kg.

The PDSA clinic in Gillingham picked Lady to take her position alongside 11 other pets from across the UK being put on a strict diet and exercise plan for the veterinary charity's annual slimming competition.

Lady's owner Louise Lane, admitted she has been spoilt and is now focused on getting the monstrous moggy fit again and improving her life expectancy.

She said: "Lady had skin cancer earlier this year and had to have the tips of her ears removed, so I think we've compensated for that by spoiling her."

"On top of her normal cat food she used to get bowls of milk or cream every day and scraps of meat that we didn't finish – including 'cat bags' that I'd bring home from restaurants for her."

"She also has a very sweet tooth and loves chocolate and ice cream."

During the last four years, PDSA has assessed the weight and general health of nearly 25,000 dogs across the UK.

The percentage of overweight dogs seen has risen from around one-in-five to more than one-in-three.

PDSA senior veterinary surgeon, Elaine Pendlebury, said: "Overweight pets are less mobile, less willing to play and more likely to develop a number of serious health conditions and have a reduced life expectancy."

"The good news is it's never too late to achieve positive change with the help of your veterinary practice."

As part of the PDSA pet fit club competition, the overall winner will receive a pet-friendly holiday worth £300.

Elaine added: "Ultimately, owners control their pet's diet and exercise. We know from our work with pet-owners that many view an overweight pet as cute and cuddly."

"What they don't see is the threat that obesity poses to their beloved animals' health and lifespan."

The combined total of this year's finalists excess weight amounts to nearly 87kg, which equates to the same as of 290 tins of pet food or a 13-stone human.



CUDDLY CAT: Many pet owners may think overweight cats such as Lady are cute, but they don't realise the dangers to their animal's health

Murderer's death inquest opened

THE inquest into the death of a convicted murderer has officially been opened and adjourned.

Bill Treeby, formerly of Queens Street, Paddock Wood, was found dead in his cell at Elmley Prison on December 12.

Maidstone Crown Court had found Treeby, pictured, guilty of the murder of his brother Jack, just two days earlier.



Treeby's two sons, Geroge and Billy Jnr, are both serving life sentences for the same crime.

At the time a spokesman for the prison service said: "At 3.07pm on Sunday, December 12, Bill Treeby was found hanging in his cell at HMP Elmley, (Sheppey). Attempts were made to resuscitate him but he was pronounced dead at 3.46pm."

"As with all deaths in custody, there will be an investigation by the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman."

The final inquest date is yet to be announced.

Sheep attacked

A DOG walker is being urged to come forward after a sheep was injured at Mote Park.

The sheep was attacked by a large brown dog near to Cobtree Hall on Thursday, December 16.

The injured animal will have to have its leg amputated or be put down.

The incident happened at about 11am and police are looking for the female dog owner who was wearing a long brown coat at the time.

Anyone else with information regarding the incident is asked to contact police on 01622 690690 quoting ref 1216-0393.

Numbers are up by six per cent

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Christmas spoils. Great deals on many items will be available, in particular on electrical and household goods such as TVs and washing machines."

The British Retail Consortium estimates £5 billion was spent in the sales last week across the UK.

Fremelin Walk's centre manager Lloyd Wright agreed that the retail centre of the town had seen an upturn in trade.

He said: "Shoppers have visited Fremelin Walk in their droves this year. On the official first day of the sales, December 27, visitor numbers were up six per cent with nearly 70,000 shoppers visiting the Walk."

"Although it's too early to say, our retailers appear to be doing brisk business while shoppers are taking advantage of many good bargains."

The total is expected to be £22.5bn by the end of January – although that is £13bn less than the sales takings 12 months ago.

MAIDSTONE and Weald MP Helen Grant has continued her busy holiday season schedule by becoming the patron of the town's Osteoporosis Support Group.

Helen, who will take over from former MP Ann Widdecombe in the role, said "Whether you are personally affected by the disease or a health professional seeking technical information the NOS offers a wide range of services to assist. I am very proud to become their patron in Maidstone."

Christmas day arrests help police drive home the anti-drink message

SIX Maidstone motorists were arrested during a police Christmas crackdown on holiday drink-drivers.

Officers in mid Kent arrested 12 people during Christmas week, five of whom were taken into custody on Christmas Day.

Mid Kent traffic officer PC Warren Jarvi stressed that there was no safe limit when it came to drinking and driving.

He said: "Five were arrested on Christmas Day and would have missed out on spending the day with their families. They will start the year with a court appearance and they all face a driving ban and a fine."

"If you are going out this New Year's Eve either designate a driver who will not drink alcohol or make alternative arrangements to get home, such as a train or taxi."

"No one wants to spend the first day of 2011 in a police cell having been arrested for drink driving."

Police have named five of those who were arrested during the road checks.

Adam Chawner, 20, of Coombe Road, Maidstone, has been charged with taking a vehicle without consent, driving with no insurance and

drink-driving and bailed to appear at Maidstone Magistrates Court on January 21.

Audrius Katinas, 20, of Brunswick Street East, Maidstone, has been charged with driving with no insurance and drink-driving and bailed to appear at Maidstone court on January 13.

Vidas Mikalauskas, 47, of The Quarries, Boughton Monchelsea, has been charged with drink-driving and bailed to appear at Maidstone court on 21 January

Adam Wratten, 22, of Worcester Road, Maidstone, has been charged with driving otherwise than in accordance with a licence, driving with no insurance and drink-driving and bailed to appear at Maidstone court on January 18.

Dean Fuller, 23, of Cryals Road, Matfield, Tonbridge, has been charged with drink-driving and bailed to appear at Maidstone court on January 18.

A 55-year-old woman from Maidstone was also arrested for drink-driving and careless driving and is on police bail until January 25, pending further enquiries.

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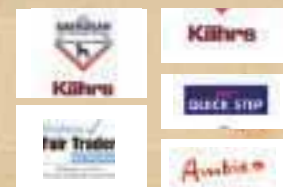
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FORGOTTEN: Church remains are all that's left of Eastbridge while Hampton-on-Sea was lost to coastal erosion

New atlas reveals Kent's lost villages

DETAILS of lost villages are set to be published in a new atlas of Britain – the first comprehensive volume of its type to be published in 40 years.

The Times Atlas of Britain will show how the country has changed, so forgotten settlements will be included in its pages.

Kent has a number of villages forgotten throughout the ages for varying reasons.

Among the settlements lost in time are several on Romney Marsh – abandoned because of the Black Death, outbreaks of malaria or unfertile soil.

Others were left by inhabitants because of the threat of invasion or raiding parties from the continent.

Jethro Lennox, editor of the book, said: "While compiling the first comprehensive atlas of its type to be published in the UK in more than 40 years, we were not only interested in how the United Kingdom has changed geographically over time, but the implications for the residents of our islands."

Among these are Hampton-on-Sea, lost to coastal erosion in 1916, and sited close to Herne Bay.

All that now remains is a part of the original pier, the Hampton Inn, and part of the coastal defences which are visible at low tide.

Some of the cottages in the lost settlement were built from the timbers of boats and fishing was its main industry.

Always threatened by the erosion of the coast and the encroachment of the sea the plight of the area was championed in the late 19th century by former Metropolitan Police officer Edmund Reid, one of the detectives attached to the Jack the Ripper enquiry.

The Black Death accounted for Dode, near Rochester, which was abandoned when its inhabitants were killed in the Middle Ages.

■ BY NICK AMES

Malaria was a problem on Romney Marsh from around 1500 to the mid-18th century because of mosquitoes living in pools of stagnant water.

Lost villages have been identified by parish and court records. For several the only surviving evidence are the walls of ruined churches.

Ogarswick – mentioned in a census of 1851 – is remembered only by a solitary cross in the grounds of a farmhouse.

All that is left of the village of Hope is the remains of its church – sited in one of the bleakest and loneliest parts of the marsh.

The 12th century ruins mark the centre of a settlement which was abandoned by most of its population because of the plague, although some lingered on for another couple of centuries.

Historic documents say a manor house and parsonage once existed and according to church records the bells of the ruin were taken to New Romney.

The site is near to that which is reputedly the site of a battle involving King Arthur.

A 13th century priest named Layamon compiled a history of Britain in which he describes a battle between King Arthur's men and those of Mordred at Old Romney.

Eastbridge is the name of a road leading across the marsh from Dymchurch, but it was once a village.

Now all that remains is part of a church tower, accessible through a small wood.

Records say there was once a small population of just over 20 people living locally and it is also mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1087.

Broomhill is just a scattering of stones after it was flooded by a huge storm in 1287, with much loss of life while Blackmanstone is just a bridge.

Strike threat to trains

WORKERS on Southeastern trains will ballot for strike action in a row over jobs.

Members of the Rail Maritime and Transport (RMT) union based at Charing Cross and Victoria, London, will be vote in the next few weeks and any action would have a knock-on effect on Kent stations.

The RMT said plans to cut the post of team leader would compromise safety.

However, Southeastern said the changes, already in place at Cannon Street and London Bridge stations, were working well.

An RMT spokesman said: "Southeastern have got the nerve to jack up fares by 13 per cent while hacking back on platform operations that will delay and disrupt the dispatch process while putting their staff in the firing line as and when things go wrong."

Red at charity's heart

THE BRITISH Heart Foundation is urging Kent to go red in Feb, which is National Heart Month, to help raise vital funds to fight the UK's biggest killer.

Plans for how to turn February red by wearing items of clothing that colour are well underway and it is not too early to start thinking about how you can go Red for Heart by ordering for your free fundraising kit. The coming 12 months are an extra special year for the BHF as it is celebrating its 50th birthday.

Kim Brophy, fundraising manager in Kent, said: "Everyone can get involved with the campaign. As long as it's red anything goes."

Order a free Red for Heart Fundraising Kit by visiting bhf.org.uk/red or call 0845 241 0976.

Voluntary conservation survey enables farmers to help save endangered birds

RESULTS from the RSPB's Volunteer and Farmer Alliance surveys carried out over the past year have shown how vital Kent's farmland is to providing habitats for birds.

The free surveys help farmers to identify birds of conservation concern on their land. The RSPB can then advise them on how to help these species and make the most of their farms for wildlife.

Bruce Fowkes, RSPB south east's farmland advisor, said: "We've had a great response from farmers in Kent wanting to take part. The Volunteer and Farmer Alliance is all about helping them to help the birds."

"The distribution maps produced from the surveys show where priority species are so the farmers can put in place targeted conservation measures."

In Kent, 11 farms covering a total area of 1001.6 hectares were surveyed this summer including land near Ashford, New Romney,

Queensborough, Dover and Maidstone.

In the south east, the top birds seen during surveys were the chaffinch and blackbird which were both seen on 97 per cent of farms, the blue tit which was present on 95 per cent, and the wren which was present on 93 per cent.

Some of the least seen birds included key species of conservation concern such as the corn bunting and the grey partridge which were only seen on 16 per cent of farms surveyed.

The surveys take place over three visits between April and July, in the early morning when birds are most active and there is the best chance of seeing as many as possible.

Work is already being done with Kent farmers to help benefit some of the birds seeing the greatest decline. The data collected from the surveys will add to the understanding of how these birds are doing and enable further conservation action to be taken.



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yourlocalinterview

QUESTION & ANSWER

KATE BOSLEY



Q Can you tell us about your job and what the hospice does?

A My role is to ensure the Heart of Kent Hospice is well run and offers a cost-effective, high-quality service. I need to ensure we have enough funds and these are spent wisely.

The hospice provides care to patients and families affected by life-limiting illnesses. It has a 12-bed inpatient unit giving symptom control, respite and end-of-life care to more than 200 patients and their families each year.

We also provide day therapy for about 100 patients a year, as well as medical/nursing support. Our community specialist team sees up to 300 patients in their own homes.

Q What sort of events are used to raise money?

A The hospice aims to meet all tastes so it can provide opportunities for everyone to raise cash and impact on the care offered. You can skydive, take part in our fashion show, host coffee mornings, and make quilts – just about anything.

Our biggest event sees hundreds of women on a moonlight walk and our smallest is donations of pocket money from children.

It all adds up.

Q What would you like to see in the future for the hospice?

A I believe in patients and carers having a real choice about care. For many, being at

home is important and would make a difference, but it can be challenging as 24-hour support is not always available. I would like to see this change.

I believe the hospice can provide a service which makes being at home a real possibility. To continue our services and develop the Hospice at Home service we need funding.

With our Friends at Heart scheme donors can give as little as £2 a month, knowing this small donation will add with others to make a significant difference.

Q What do you consider your greatest achievement?

A When I was first in post as CEO I worked with the board of trustees and directors to set a three-year strategy. This was fully embraced by the team and we worked on all aspects which included developing patient services as well as maximising income.

This year we came to the end of the three years and we set about reviewing and refreshing the strategy. It was a great achievement for us all to be able to set a new direction having succeeded in meeting our objectives in many areas of our original strategy.

Q What is the worst thing about your job?

A Working with such a skilled and dedicated team and knowing we could achieve so much more but the finances are not available.

Q Do you have any other passions and hobbies?

A I am passionate about my family who prove on a daily basis that young people are funny, clever, kind, hard-working and a credit to society. Mine are anyway, and so are their friends. Cycling has improved my life. I cycle almost every day, covering about 100 miles a week. I completed Land's End to John O' Groats and enjoyed every minute.

Q If you could have any job what would it be and why?

A My current job is the best in the world, but if I had to change I would want to be a professional cyclist. I would love to cycle among the greatest. I've left it a bit late but am training hard, just in case.

Q Can you tell us something about yourself readers would never have known?

A I am severely dyslexic and get by with the use of computers and colleagues who make sure I don't get it wrong too many times. Dyslexia is a real challenge but my message is you can achieve with dyslexia but don't underestimate how much harder it is.

Q Where can people go to find out about the hospice?

A By visiting www.hokh.co.uk, or contact me at the hospice.

Q & A

The chief executive of the Heart of Kent Hospice talks about her work to reporter **Joe Bill** and explains why today's young people are a credit to society, how she copes with dyslexia, and her passion for cycling

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Women Seeking

OUTGOING blonde, 29, big blue eyes, great personality, fun to be with, WLTm intelligent mature male for a loving relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353661 ☒

VERY attractive happy go lucky female, 37, long dark hair, lovely smile, seeks cool exciting guy to enjoy life to the full with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353659 ☒

DISCO queen, fun loving, black, attractive serene female, 37, slim, adores music, theatre, reading, nature, seeks genuine, caring gent, 36-49, N/S. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 333815

VERY pretty funny slim brunette, 39, fit and active, seeks good looking guy for fun romance and more. ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354653 ☒

TALL blue eyed blonde, curvy and fun, loves dancing, seeks tall well built guy to share happy times and see what the future brings. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354651 ☒

ROCKEFELLER 38, medium build, fair, funny, bubbly, likes conversation, seeks male for good times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353359

KIND professional clean shaven gent, sought by petite, attractive lady, 51 for discreet daytime relationship. West Sussex. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382982 ☒

ATTRACTIVE intelligent blonde, full of life, seeks tall, good looking well built male for uncomplicated fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355275 ☒

SHY curvy blonde, 21, likes R&B, clubbing, meals out/in, seeks dark, good looking, slim guy who knows how to press the right buttons. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355273 ☒

BEAUTIFUL slim brunette, big brown eyes, 39, kind and gentle nature, seeks similar kind male for quality/fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355243 ☒

ATTRACTIVE female 38, blue eyes, blonde hair, WLTm nice looking slim/well built man to share life, love and special times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355241 ☒

CURVY blue eyed blonde, many interests, seeks well built male who's looking for an uncomplicated relationship with a real woman. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355239 ☒

HAPPY attractive, versatile black female, 37, 5ft 7ins, slim, likes reading, music, nature, seeks N/S, genuine gent, 35-48 to share life, laughter. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 333815

ATTRACTIVE black lady, 5ft 6ins, black hair, slim, kissable lips, likes walks, horse riding, go karts, seeks professional white male, 35-45, athletic, 5ft 11ins-6ft. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353897

CURVY blue eyed brunette, 23, fun loving and bubbly, likes wild nights out but would prefer cosy nights in with a special fun loving older male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355271 ☒

PETITE curvy female, witty and fun, always on the go, many interests WLTm intelligent outgoing male for good times. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355269 ☒

BEAUTIFUL slim, Oriental babe, 22, seeks older, generous guy 65 plus who knows how to pamper. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 348545

PRETTY happy go lucky lady, no ties, seeks tall, slim, attractive guy with big heart as well as personality for fun friendship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352675 ☒

QUIET smart, brown eyed lady, likes meals out and dancing, WLTm laidback mature man to share laughter/TLC. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352673 ☒

CURVY brunette, loving but a bit of a dreamer looking to share special times together with likeminded easygoing male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352671 ☒

PRETTY black lady, 39, 36G bust, 5ft 3ins, likes reading, cinema, meals out, nature, travel, theatre, seeks tall, slim, professional white male, 35-50 who is honest, genuine, loving, funny and spiritual. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355311 ☒

LADY 44, GSOH, short, curvy, dark hair, seeks good guy for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355391

HAPPY fun loving, attractive, black female, 38, 5ft 7ins, slim, likes theatre, reading, music, nature, seeks N/S, genuine caring gent, 35-48 to share life and laughter. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 333815

BLACK female, likes meals out, theatre, seeks solvent white male, 30-47 for genuine relationship. Ashford. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382910

LADY 50, West Sussex, seeks generous romantic for discreet, special daytime fun, no strings. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382870

BEAUTIFUL slim brunette, will try anything once, varied interests, seeks laid back male for friendship, good conversations and more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353679 ☒

REAL party girl, blonde, 34, attractive and funny, looking for similar guy who also knows how to have a good time. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353663 ☒

ATTRACTIVE fun, friendly blonde, seeks fun guy Sutton. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382502

TINY attractive fun loving lady, likes to cook romantic meals, music and dancing, WLTm medium built likeminded male for loving LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352119 ☒

ADORABLE beauty, curvy, caring, down to earth, trained lawyer, seeks good man for friendship, companionship, maybe more. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 351337

LOVELY green eyed brunette likes long romantic walks, seeks tall, outgoing male with GSOH to light up her life. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 351343 ☒

TALL slim blonde, 46, loves to travel looking for someone genuine and honest to share cosy evenings in with a bottle of wine, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 351341 ☒

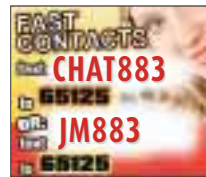
DOWN to earth, slim brunette, curves in all the right places, looking for easygoing, fun guy for some relaxed fun times. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353415 ☒

LIVELY curvy blue eyed blonde, very active, seeks hunky energetic, likeminded guy with to get to know and hang out with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354615 ☒

CURVY strawberry blonde, 26, baby blue eyes, seeks fun loving tactile guy for friendship, hopefully more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352673 ☒

TALL female, medium build, bubbly, chatty, likes nights in, cooking, days out, seeks interesting male for friendship, maybe more. Worthing. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353357 ☒

VICKY attractive, kind, down to earth, black British, likes travel, writing, reading, cooking, socialising, seeks generous, good man who is family orientated. Essex. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353033



OUTGOING blonde bombshell, 44, gorgeous green eyes, seeks caring male who is also looking for lots of fun and TLC. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353655 ☒

CURVY young looking widow loves dancing, nights out, but would prefer cosy nights in with that special male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353483 ☒

MISCHIEVOUS female, feminine, attractive, cultured, likes arts, music seeks strong minded male for friendship/companionship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354619 ☒

WARM hearted female, curves in all the right places, new to area, seeks intelligent male to share interests, friendship and maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353419 ☒

LOVELY lady, 48, beautiful curves, many interests, just wants to meet an honest decent guy and make him happy. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353417 ☒

60YR old female, seeks special N/S, not drinking gent, loving and caring for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353253 ☒

BERYL 70 plus, 5ft 6ins, slim, fair hair, green eyes, seeks gent who likes travel, theatre, sports, meals out. Hampshire. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353165 ☒

OLD fashioned girl, 49, fun, friendly, seeks mature male for fun times, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382192

KAREN 51, smoker, many interests, seeks country loving guy, 35-45 who is fun, loving and caring. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382050 ☒

LYN young 50yr old lady, divorced, attractive, size 16, black hair, green eyes, no ties, dog, likes walks, meals out, nights in, socialising, seeks gent, 40-55. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 350023

STUNNING blonde, feels life is for living looking for her Mr Right, 45-55, who can make her feel special. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 350723 ☒

CURVY blonde, big blue eyes, many interests WLTm genuine male to make her laugh and brighten up her day. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 350721 ☒

STUNNING slim green eyed blonde, fun to be with, likes nights out, looking for that special someone. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 350691 ☒

YOUNG black female, likes meals out, theatre, seeks solvent white male 30-47 for genuine relationship. Ashford. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382706

VOLUPTUOUS bubbly female with red hair, 32, outgoing and fun, seeks genuine, down to earth male to enjoy life and love with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354649 ☒

Men Seeking

YOUNG good looking, medium build male, mid 30's, seeks mature, older female for fun and passionate evenings in the cold weather. London/Herts. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354877

GRAHAM 55, 5ft 11ins, dark hair, brown eyes, medium build, N/S, friendly, reliable, genuine, GSOH, easygoing, honest, tactile, likes most things, seeks attractive, slim-medium, N/S female, 45-55. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383156 ☒

FUN loving guy 50, 5ft 10ins, seeks outgoing, feminine, mature female, 45-60 for TLC. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354803

SINGLE professional Indian male, N/S, attractive, 5ft 7ins, medium build, vegetarian, 50, young outlook, seeks white female for relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354781 ☒

LOVELY warm 60 plus lady sought for special friendship with late 50's male, full heart, empty wallet, GSOH. Surrey/Sussex. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383192 ☒

TOY boy 20's, seeks Mrs Claus for a fantastic Christmas full of lust and passion. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354925 ☒

MALE 55, passionate, lots of TLC to give adventurous, broadminded lady looking for soul mate. Hampshire. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354851

50'S and still sexy, looking for a pleasant, passionate man who will hit the right buttons. Me 55, just call. Portsmouth. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354849

STEVE 42, medium build, genuine, seeks nice female for love and family life. Basingstoke. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355193 ☒

BEAUTIFUL slim blonde 38, loving, sensitive and a hopeless romantic, looking for love with similar tactile male to be her best mate. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354647 ☒

PETITE curvy cuddly blonde, hazel eyes, much love to give, seeks romantic, tactile male for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354625 ☒

SMALL attractive black haired female, 23, WLTm someone special for a happy loving future together. Age/looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354621 ☒

PRETTY blonde with lovely green eyes seeks male for good conversation and companionship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 349901 ☒

AFFECTIONATE curvy green eyed brunette seeking fit active male to share new adventures with. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 349919 ☒

LOVELY green eyed brunette, creative and artistic, loves to feel the wind in her hair seeks inspirational male to end her loneliness. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353637 ☒

ATTRACTIVE petite blonde, baby blue eyes, many interests, seeks similar outgoing male to spend quality time with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353635 ☒

CURVY green eyed brunette, 45, easygoing and fun, looking to share precious moments with that special someone. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353633 ☒

WHITE male, 52, likes cinema, holidays, weekends away, seeks sincere, genuine, black lady, 35 plus for serious relationship. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354543 ☒

MALE seeks female, 27-30 for fun and friendship. Croydon. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354465 ☒

NICE guy 52, average build, seeks curvy female, 24-45 for LTR. Wembley. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353355

PROFESSIONAL successful male, 45, 6ft, adventurous, fun loving, romantic, seeks attractive, outgoing female to enjoy the good things in life. Brighton. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353349

51YR old retired chef, 5ft 8ins, Irish/Italian, down to earth, seeks petite female, any age/looks. Eastbourne. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382806

DAVID 51, divorced, shy, 5ft 7ins, seeks female for friendship, 45 plus. Worthing. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382784 ☒

MALE seeks slim female, 38-48 with varied interests. S London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353017

SLIM 52yr old male, 5ft 9ins, N/S, lots of love to give, seeks similar aged female to share life together. Crawley. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352865 ☒

CHRIS 49, own home, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. Portsmouth. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353977

MALE youthful 60's, slim, N/S, mid OGD, likes most things, seeks similar, attractive, kind, genuine female for relationship. East Grinstead. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352363

ANOTHER Christmas that's not enjoyable? Sincere gent, 49, seeks lady, 35-45 to celebrate, exchange presents, party and shop till we drop. Think about it, its time to change. Lindfield. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383122 ☒

MARK single dad, likes stock cars, nights in/out, seeks female for fun and friendship. Horley. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383112 ☒

32YR old male, 6ft 3ins, attractive, seeks similar age, attractive female for good times. Crawley. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354563

WHITE male, 52, likes cinema, holidays, weekends away, seeks sincere, genuine, black lady, 35 plus for serious relationship. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354543 ☒

PROFESSIONAL successful male, 45, 6ft, adventurous, fun loving, romantic, seeks attractive, outgoing female to enjoy the good things in life with. Brighton. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355361

DAVE 54, WLTm lady for discreet friendship and fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355433 ☒

DIVORCED male, 55, 5ft 8ins, medium build, Libra, GSOH, OHAC, seeks female friend for safe adult fun. Discretion assured. Hemel Hempstead. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355407

PAUL 61, N/S, likes walks, museum, coast, seeks passionate, adventurous, blonde female, 40-65 for LTR. Cuddly build preferred. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 355305

DAVE 60, 5ft 11ins, caring, romantic, seeks female, 40 plus, size 14-16 to chill out for fun times. Portsmouth. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354789 ☒

GOOD times ahead with 50's sensible guy, GSOH, medium build, likes all things cultural, travel, seeks lady with similar interests for friendship, maybe more. NW London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383024 ☒

YOUNG 60yr old Bexhill man, likes cats, travel, cooking, seeks genuine female, looks unimportant at what's inside, 54-70. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383016

MARCUS 35, 6ft 1ins, dark hair, average build, good looking, sporty, many interests, seeks female/couple for fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383064

TALL attractive, intelligent male, 46, seeks funny, sexy, female lover for passionate meetings. S Wilts. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354685 ☒

MICHAEL 44, 5ft 10ins, medium build, seeks naughty female for fun and lots more. Reigate. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354133 ☒

ATTRACTIVE blond, blue eyed male, 47, HIV positive, genuine, sincere, GSOH, OHAC, seeks warm, sincere, Oriental/black/Asian female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354749

YOUNG looking 60yr old guy, 5ft 7ins, brown hair/eyes, likes lunches out, seeks slim-medium build female for friendship only. Crawley. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354713 ☒

HASTINGS male, 46, 5ft 10ins, medium build, blue eyes, fair hair, GSOH, chatty, romantic, caring, likes walks, cycling, cosy times, seeks similar female, 29-48 for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383050 ☒

MUCH too young to be 57, hard-working, nice guy, slim, 5ft 6ins, smoker, smart/casual, missing female company, likes most things, looking for a fun LTR. Hastings. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383032 ☒

52YR old male, slim, 5ft 9ins, N/S, lots of love, care, attention to give to female of similar age. Crawley. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354211

6FT 2ins black guy, seeks female for no strings fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383028 ☒

CURVES quest! Tall, slim, artist chap, seeks buxom, voluptuous lady for movie going and popcorn munching. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354331 ☒

PROFESSIONAL male, N/S, moderate drinker, seeks black/Oriental female, 35-43 for LTR. London. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383058 ☒

GENUINE nice guy young 50's, romantic, tactile, solvent, GSOH, likes music, countryside, DIY, car boots, candlelit cuisine, seeks cuddly, attractive lady. Haslemere. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353843

LOCAL Andover male, seeks local Andover female, 30-50 for loving, lasting relationship. N/S with no children. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353787 ☒

EASYGOING fun loving guy 6ft 2ins, mousey hair, blue/grey eyes, likes pubs, clubs, walks, motor-bikes, seeks soul mate. Littlehampton. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382948 ☒

ATTRACTIVE blond, blue eyed male, HIV positive, extremely genuine, sincere, GSOH, OHAC, seeks warm, sincere, Oriental/Black/Asian female. Essex. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 353693

26YR old tall male, dark complexion, handsome, caring, seeks female, 18-40 for kisses, cuddles nights in/out and love. Portsmouth. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 354131 ☒

ROGER 68, 5ft 11ins, N/S, romantic, easygoing, seeks slim-medium build, attractive female for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352669

6FT 2ins male, slim, N/S, brown hair/eyes, average looks, likes nights in/out, country pubs, animals, seeks similar lady for LTR. East Sussex. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382644 ☒

MICK 52, 6ft 1ins, honest, reliable, loyal, seeks similar female, 40-50. Brighton. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382632 ☒

Gay Seeking

YOUNG 60yr old male, likes animals, cats, tv, cooking, seeks TV/CD, 50-70 for LTR. Bexhill. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 383018

TALL white, good looking guy, London, non scene, straight acting, 29, seeks older, retired gent, 65 plus. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 348543

ASSERTIVE male, 55, seeks sub male, 40-65. Redhill. Surrey/Sussex/Kent. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 381648

DISCREET gay male, attractive, 5ft 6ins, N/S, easygoing, submissive nature, seeks older assertive male for fun and friendship. Portsmouth. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 352387

38YR old male, bi curious, seeks likeminded male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 382304 ☒

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YOUR LETTERS

I believe murderers must die behind bars

At the risk of sounding like a member of a right-wing fascist political party, which I am not, I still believe the term "life imprisonment" should mean life in prison.

In the last edition of yourmaidstone, there were two sentences handed out to convicted murderers in which "life in prison" was deemed as 23 years. They will both be older men when they come out of jail, but do they deserve the right to come out at all?

What the Treeby brothers have done has tripped apart an entire family for up to three generations, not exactly equal with the sentence they received.

I don't believe in an eye for an eye in terms of capital punishment, but I do believe in creating a real deterrent for these people.

This is something our criminal justice system seems to be failing to do. All too often do we nurture and protect our country's politically correct knee-jerk reaction to crime.

Oh, don't lock them up because they had a rough childhood or were temporarily out of control.

This is rubbish, everyone has a responsibility for their own actions, and that is how the courts should operate.

Harsh punishments should be more favoured than lenient sentences. It is surely the only way to bring back the fear of spending time locked up in prison.

Jackie Herbert, Maidstone

Greens stand alone over tuition fees

Maidstone Greens have condemned Helen Grant and Hugh Robertson's support for tuition fees as immoral and unjust.

Both MPs voted in favour of increasing the level of student debt that young people will start their life with by a further £20,000.

Local Greens have also condemned the Liberal Democrats who supported the bill. If the Government wanted to keep university education for the rich it could not have done a better job. Rather than opening up universities on the basis of ability, they have put a huge barrier in place for people from moderate backgrounds who don't want to start life with a huge millstone.

We think the Tories and their Lib Dem supporters should be ashamed of themselves for this immoral and unjust act.

The Lib Dems are especially culpable for misleading the electorate at the General Election.

Young people have been badly let down by politicians. As we are now the only mainstream party fighting for the abolition of tuition fees, I urge those who believe in free education to join the Green Party and not let Coalition ideology punish the poorest in society.

Stuart Jeffrey, Maidstone Greens

your blogger

As parents spend a fortune on presents, Gary Wright asks if we're being unfair to children



IT'S NOT often I'm impressed by a TV chef, but Jamie Oliver finally won me over last week.

I confess to a bit of a soft spot for Mr Oliver ever since I wrote a damning article about his father's alleged behaviour toward a woman guest at his hotel.

It was some 10 years ago and as I recall his proud dad – whose hotel in Essex was decorated with books by and pictures of his lisp, over-enthusiastic offspring – had treated a woman guest to a performance worthy of Basil Fawlty.

I'm pleased that the former hyper-active irritant has managed to conquer the States and earn millions, but what earned my respect was his pledge to make his own children work from the age of 10 for a few hours each weekend to learn the value of money.

The man has a point. Most children really do have it too easy and there is little support from parents to make them earn their own cash.

For example, as our economy continues to languish and parents struggle to pay the bills, I saw no evidence of youngsters going without this Christmas.

Shop bosses and internet websites are reporting another boom Christmas and, it seems to me, Santa made sure every child had the bicycle, games console or computer they required even though mum and dad might be struggling to pay the mortgage.

I understand why as parents seek to put right the wrongs of their own childhood. As they have a limited

number of Christmases with their children, they see no harm in going that extra mile to ensure their son or daughter gets everything they want.

But what do they want? What do they need? And more importantly, are we simply reinforcing the belief that money comes easily which means a big fall to earth as the teenager turns into an adult?

So Jamie Oliver should be praised for his attempt to ensure his children learn the value of money.

Children should work. They need to know that a £40 computer game will take the average parent five or six hours of work to pay for.

I was listening to someone the other day explaining – or rather making excuses for – their teenage daughter's lack of a job, claiming it was too dangerous or it would interfere with the child's free time.

By making sure their child had everything without needing to work the woman believed she was being a good parent. Unfortunately, it achieves quite the opposite. And worse than that somewhere along the line children lose respect and appreciation for what is done for them and many become, what we would have called when I was a lad, 'spoiled'.

The days of easy credit have disappeared for parents and it's time ridiculous overspending on youngsters disappeared too.

If you really want to prepare your child for life as an adult, the sooner they start learning the value of money and what graft really means, the better.

Well done Jamie Oliver.

If there is a story in your area you think we should be covering contact the news editor, **Simon Robinson**, on 01303 817185 or email him on the details above. If you want to be the next Maidstone blogger then all you have to do is submit an article to us (of around 550 words) and email it to the editor. And don't forget, for all the latest news and video from your town log-on to www.yourmaidstone.co.uk.

Demelza shops need any unwanted gifts

If Christmas has seen you with unwanted gifts or clothes, please think about donating items to your local children's hospice.

Demelza Hospice Care for Children, which runs 15 shops across Kent, East Sussex and south-east London, has seen a significant drop in donations, particularly of clothes, and is urging the community to donate unwanted items. Our stocks are severely down and we appeal to people to donate anything they don't need.

We are also always looking for volunteers for our shops. If you are interested or can help in any way, contact voluntary services manager, Lynne Clark on 01795 845218.

Claire Jordan, head of retail operations, Demelza Hospice Care

Warning sign of the ringing in your ears

It is my pleasure to again support the British Tinnitus Association's Tinnitus Awareness Week campaign, from February 4-11.

As someone who's experienced tinnitus for a decade now, I am passionate about the need to increase awareness of this debilitating condition and strongly support the charity's efforts.

As a professional musician, DJ, producer and radio presenter it

goes without saying that I love music. Blasting my eardrums with loud music was what I lived for for many years, and the ringing in my ears I experienced afterwards – which I often thought of as a sign of a brilliant night – was always something that went away after a day or so. But it was about ten years ago that the high-pitched tone in my ears failed to go away. It became a permanent noise and one which I later learnt was tinnitus.

As well as knowing first-hand how hard it can be to cope with the constant high-pitched noise, I also know countless DJs, musicians and music lovers who are affected by tinnitus as a result of exposure to loud music. While we are all now aware of the dangers and take precautions, such as using specialist earplugs to reduce the impact of loud music and prevent further hearing damage, ultimately we are resigned to a life with tinnitus. So are many thousands of others who make up the ten per cent of the UK's population who experience tinnitus. It is a travesty to think that so many of these cases could have been prevented through better awareness.

It is crucial that music lovers should be encouraged to continue enjoying music, but that they should also be better informed about how to protect their hearing. Working with the BTA, and with the support of many of those friends and colleagues with tinnitus, I want to spread the message about the importance of protecting your ears when

attending gigs and when listening to loud music. The long-term hearing health of the nation is at stake and I am making it my priority to do all I can to support the BTA in its aim to raise better tinnitus awareness.

Wearing hearing protection needn't kill the music. Good earplugs simply decrease the music volume without affecting fidelity and in turn prevent hearing damage. I continue to fuel my passion for music but now do so without risking further damage. I carry my hearing protection everywhere and, as a result, feel healthier and happier, and find my sleep is no longer disrupted by my tinnitus.

Tinnitus is not just a clubbers' affliction. People with a passion for classical music or opera who attend live concerts or who listen to loud music at home are just as likely to experience tinnitus as those who favour nightclubs. Tinnitus does not discriminate and it could potentially affect you or someone you know.

Please support the BTA's Tinnitus Awareness campaign. The BTA operates a free helpline (0800 018 0527) used by thousands each year, but as the charity receives no Government funding, this, and its other support services, are only available thanks to donations and legacies. Help to spread the word about tinnitus and the BTA and, if you can, donate to help fund the provision of tinnitus information and advice, and to help fund clinical research into a cure. Without the support services provided by the BTA, thousands of people would be

without the information and friendly advice that is often a lifeline and a source of great comfort.

Eddy Temple-Morris, XFM London producer and presenter

Your crucial support in meningitis battle

Meningitis UK would like to thank everyone who supported us throughout 2010 – a year which saw exciting advances in the fight against meningitis. We have been amazed by people's generosity and dedication despite the stresses and strains of the credit crunch. Money raised has supported research projects being carried out at universities throughout the country, all with the aim of wiping out meningitis through developing vaccines.

Despite great advances in the last 20 years with vaccines for meningitis C, Hib and pneumococcal meningitis, there is still no vaccine for meningitis B – the most common form of the disease in the UK. Six families lose a loved one to the brain bug each week. Our Search 4 a Vaccine Campaign aims to raise £7 million to fund lifesaving research into eradicating all forms of meningitis. The '4' signifies the devastating fact that meningitis can kill in under four hours.

We also distribute a range of material to raise awareness of the common symptoms and the need to act quickly, which can mean the difference between life and death.

To support Search 4 a Vaccine, call Meningitis UK (0117 373 7373) or visit www.meningitisUK.org.

Steve Dayman, chief executive, Meningitis UK

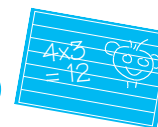
Demolish outrageous tax on rural business

The Government's decision not to extend business rates relief on empty business properties will hit the rural economy hard and could encourage demolition rather than investment.

Small to medium-sized businesses in the rural sector make a crucial contribution to the economy and the Government is unjustified in making landlords pay tax on all empty properties with a rateable value of more than £2,600. Currently, rates are only payable where the rateable value exceeds £18,000 on any empty property. This is an outrageous tax. Applying non-domestic rates to empty property is a disincentive to investment for providing and improving rural business premises to let. It is more likely to encourage demolition and other actions to make buildings unusable to avoid the tax. The supply of rural business space is essential for a business-led economic recovery. Penalising landlords in this way is counter-productive.

The Country Land and Business Association (CLA) would like to see empty property relief from rates extended indefinitely to all business premises where broadband is not available – rural premises without broadband do not attract tenants.

Rupert Ashby, CLA regional director



BREAK TIME



POWERFUL: NLL Academy's cast of Too Much Punch For Judy

Anti drink-driving play packs a punch

DRAMA students at a Maidstone Academy have stunned audiences with a breathtaking performance of a drink-drive documentary play.

Pupils from the NLL Academy in Loose performed Mark Wheeler's award-winning Too Much Punch for Judy for families, friends and staff as a timely reminder not to drink and drive during the festive season.

The cast, who are studying for their BTEC National Diploma in Drama, replayed the harrowing true story of a young woman who kills her sister in an alcohol-related road accident in 1983.

Almost 10 years later the same woman is responsible for another death in a road accident where she was not only drunk but had cannabis in her bloodstream.

Drama teacher, Tabbi Holness said: "Too Much Punch for Judy is a powerful and moving narrative.

"I have been very impressed with the focus, dedication and talent of the cast. We now intend to take this show on tour around local secondary schools.

"The students' performance moved some members of the audience to tears.

"If our performance makes one person think twice about drinking and driving then it is a success."

University bids farewell to 'inspirational' leader

■ BY JOE BILL

THE New Year will see a new beginning for the University for the Creative Arts as it starts the search for a new leader.

Professor Elaine Thomas, has announced her retirement from her position as vice-chancellor of the university.

Professor Thomas will officially leave the university, which has campuses in Medway, Maidstone and Canterbury, in December 2011.

Originally appointed as the director of the Surrey Institute of Art & Design in January 2000, Elaine was then named rector of UCA following the merger between the Surrey Institute and the Kent Institute of Art & Design.

It was in this role that Elaine spearheaded the transformation of the institution from University College to University in 2008, creating the UK's first specialist creative arts university.

Famous television presenter, Loyd Grossman, who is also chairman of the UCA Board of Governors, announced the retirement.

He said: "Professor Thomas has been an exceptional vice chancellor and we owe her immense thanks for all that she has accomplished during her tenure.

"Under her inspirational leadership, UCA has greatly enhanced its regional, national and international reputation, achieving recognition for its world-leading research and receiving acclaim for its distinguished alumni.

"Consequently, the University has seen a



EXCEPTIONAL: Lloyd Grossman praised outgoing UCA vice chancellor Elaine Thomas for her achievements

massive increase in student applications."

The former Masterchef presenter continued: "Professor Thomas has consistently championed the value of UCA's disciplines to business and society.

"A passionate advocate of the creative arts, she has fiercely argued for the need to invest in universities such as ours, to nurture the talent and skills that feed the UK's enviable reputation as a leader in the global creative economy."

With around 7,000 students studying, the UCA is one of Europe's largest specialist Universities of art.

The UCA Board of Governors has appointed a search committee to begin the process of appointing a successor to Professor Thomas.

UCA has started the careers of a number of famous names in the art and design world including, fashion megastar Karen Millen, designer Zandra Rhodes and artist Tracey Emin.

SEND your schools news and pictures to yourmaidstone@kosmedia.co.uk. You can also upload your video clips of schools events on to www.yourkenttv.co.uk

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Drawing on his experience

Former soldier Fitzzy turns the
grim reality of war into art

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DAY & NIGHT

Celebrating our county

THE Arthouse gallery at the Oad Street Centre, Sittingbourne, is holding an art exhibition entirely about Kent.

There will be artwork from Geoff Hall, John Bostock, Nigel Wallace as well as examples of woodturning from Rob Litherland.

Visit www.arthousegallery-kent.co.uk for more information about this free exhibition.

Three Degrees of fun

FAMOUS Philadelphia female soul group The Three Degrees are coming to Chatham soon.

The act, who are responsible for the legendary song When Will I See You Again, play at the Central Theatre in Chatham on January 28, from 7.30pm.

Tickets are £21 each and available from www.whatsonmedway.co.uk or by calling 01634 338338.

Join the blues party

THE Blues Brothers Party, comes to the Orchard Theatre in Dartford next week.

From to January 11 to 15, Jake and Elwood hold a rocking soul party featuring all the favourites from the hit movie.

Tickets are from £16.50 to £24.50. Visit www.orchardtheatre.co.uk to book or for more information or call 01322 220000.

Observational comedy

BRIGHT young comedian, actor and presenter Marlon Davis bursts onto the Hazlitt Theatre stage in February.

He embodies his characters and delivers his material with skilful observations. Davis won the FHM Search For a Stand-Up Hero Competition in 2009.

Tickets are £10 and available by calling the box office on 01622 758611, or see www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk.

Book in for musical

WET Wet Wet's Marti Pellow stars in a musical adaptation of the famous novel Jekyll and Hyde.

Thw show, at the Churchill Theatre in Bromley, will be in town from January 20 to 29. Tickets for the Broadway hit are priced at around £30. Visit www.ambassador tickets.com for details or call 0844 8717615 or 08448 717 620.

Supreme entertainer

MARY Wilson, one of the singers from The Supremes is on tour early this year. She'll be arriving at the Orchard Theatre in Dartford on March 13.

Expect to hear classics such as Baby Love, Where Did Our Love Go?, Stop in the Name of Love and many, many more.

Call 01322 220000 to book tickets (£28.50) or see www.orchardtheatre.co.uk.

One-to-one with Gyles

ONE Show presenter, Just a Minute presenter and raconteur Gyles Brandreth brings his One-to-One show to Maidstone next month.

The acclaimed show will arrive at the Hazlitt Theatre on Sunday, February 6.

Tickets are £16 each and available from the box office on 01622 758611, or see www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk

The art of recovery

GLENN FITZPATRICK

Wednesday, January 12,
Horsebridge Centre, Whitstable



FORMER soldier Glenn Fitzpatrick has used his experience of war to produce a unique collection of artwork.

Drawing inspiration from his time as an ambulance driver in the first Gulf War, when coalition forces removed the invading Iraqis from Kuwait, the drawings and sculptures which form Symbols of Society are a powerful reminder that, for many veterans of combat, reintegration into normal life is not an easy transition.

Glenn – or “Fitzy” as he is known in both the military and art worlds – suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder on his return to civilian life and he works to raise funds for sufferers of combat stress as well as Help for Heroes.

Deployed as a driver of a converted Armoured Personnel Carrier which was tasked with taking medics into firefights, Glenn was in the Saudi desert in 1990 with war just weeks away.

“I was in the Queen’s Royal Irish Hussars, a tank regiment, aged just 18 and one of the youngest troopers there,” he said.

“It was Christmas and I decided to go to a Mass, I was bought up a Catholic and always retained some sort of core belief.

“Going to a service wasn’t something I’d normally do, however.

“But when a couple of carols were being sung I was fighting back the tears.

“I was missing my family but I didn’t want anyone to see, after all we are all supposed to be men of steel.”

Glenn wanted to find an outlet in the trepidation of days leading up to a war he knew was inevitable.

“You don’t bring all that armour out into one place for nothing,” he said.

So he decided to draw characters from cartoon magazine Viz on his comrades’ tanks.

“It was good for morale – comedy goes a long way,” said Glenn. “Everyone wanted a drawing of Roger Mellié or another favourite, like Johnny Fartpants.

“I started to get known and met people across the different ranks.

“They started saying they felt I had some talent and should go to art school. So I said to myself if I get out of here I will.”



During the period of combat with Iraqi forces – defeated on the ground in 100 hours – he found himself and his ambulance much in demand.

“We were under fire from tanks trying to get to casualties,” he said. “One time there was a wounded Iraqi – he’d been hit maybe six times. The medics ran out to treat him while I ran round the perimeter laying down covering fire.

“Sometimes in The Army it can be a fairly dormant life. But in combat the adrenalin and training kicks in and you act on instinct. It’s a

relief the waiting is over, to be honest.”

After his time in the service: “I signed on for the minimum – three years – but never expected a war,” he decided to pursue his interest in art, attending what is now University College of Art, in his home city of Canterbury.

His talent was recognized as he left with a Master’s Degree.

“I intend my work to make a statement,” Glenn said. “I don’t wear my medal anymore, even though I am proud of what we achieved – liberating Kuwait.

“Instead I want people to make up their own minds. One of my pieces shows a bayonet attached to a petrol pump.

“I’ve just called it 24862593, that was my Army number. You can be brutal about it and say it was a war for oil but I like to leave it open to interpretation.”

On Wednesday, January 12, an exhibition of Glenn’s work is being staged at the Horsebridge Centre, Whitstable.

It is free to visitors and runs until the following Tuesday.

A further event is planned for April in Margate and the artist is currently talking to galleries about taking it further afield.

“I was lucky,” he said. “After being a soldier I had something to fall back on. Others haven’t got that.

“Those who put their life on the line deserve and chance to find their true talents, so I believe free education for former servicemen and women is a right they should be able to take up.”



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1) M&Co – striped berry jumper dress with exposed zip detail, £28; 2) George at ASDA – Christmas print jumper dress, £16; 3) Bonprix – nordic knitted jumper dress, £32.90; 4) Jane Norman – striped button hem slash jumper, £32; 5) Littlewoods.com – grey belted jumper dress, £45; 6) River Island – navy aran knitted jumper dress, £39.99.



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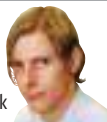
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CASSY, TIM GREEN AND LEON

Saturday, January 29, Tunnel, Chatham



A CLUTCH of top house DJs play in Medway this month.

Bedlam Events have booked Cassy, Tim Green and Leon to take to the turntables at Tunnel.

The trio are three of the big names in European dance music and have played the world's biggest clubs, including Fabric in London and Circoloco in Ibiza.

They will be playing some of the most cutting edge dance music, loosely spanning the genres of tech-house, minimal house and techno.

Tim Green has put out work on labels such as Dirty Bird and

Get Physical, while Cassy is known for her association with Cocoon. Also on the bill and spinning tunes are Alex Kilby and Minimal Kontakt.

Tunnel is in Fort Horsted, Primrose Close, Chatham.

The event is ticket only and takes place through the night, from 10pm to 6am.

Tickets cost £15 from www.clubtickets.com, Hekkle Hairdressers in Chatham High Street and Zee and Co in Maidstone High Street. Only 500 are available. Over 18s only, ID required.



DAVE SWARBRICK

Tuesday, January 11, Central Theatre, Chatham



REGARDED by many in the country as Britain's finest folk fiddler, with a style copied by many, Dave Swarbrick makes a welcome return to Medway.

He has spent more than five decades in the musical headlines, ranging from his work with folk legends Fairport Convention to collaborations with folk's finest luminaries.

As well as his considerable musical talents, Swarbrick's charm and wit make him a fine storyteller and raconteur.

This show is a chance to get up close and personal to the man, for an evening of tunes, stories and reminiscences.

For many years one of the mainstays of Fairport Conven-

tion, he was a member of the band when they made Leige and Leaf and is seen as one of British folk rock's most influential figures.

He was also one of the main movers to start the Cropedy folk festival, which showcases up and coming bands as well as old favourites.

He has been described by some as "the most influential British fiddle player bar none" he has put out solo material as well as having an extensive back catalogue with many acts.

Tickets are £9 each. Call 01634 338338 to book or visit www.whatsonmedway.co.uk for more information about the event.

WE'RE GOING ON A BEAR HUNT

Friday and Saturday, January 21 & 22,
Central Theatre, Chatham



SALLY Cookson's cheerful adaptation of the popular children's book is a great chance for youngsters and their parents to visit the theatre.

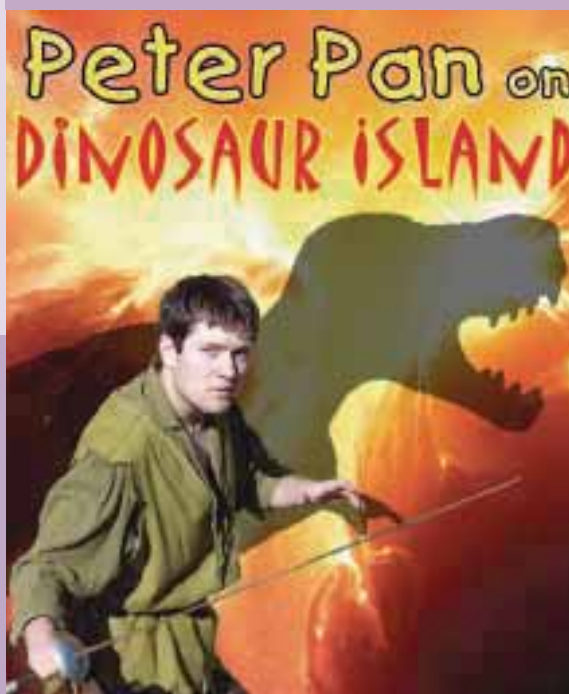
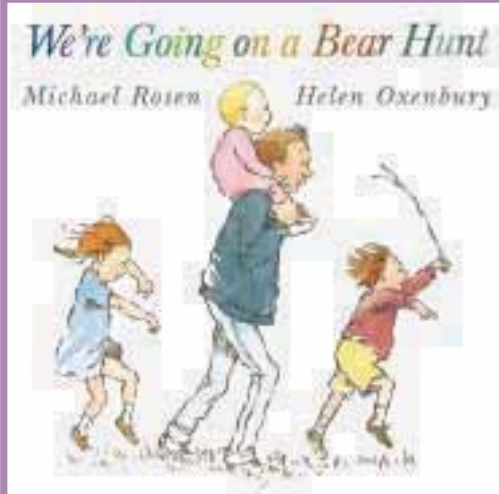
Performed by expert children's entertainers, together they create a delightfully playful world using a variety of props.

An expedition into the woods leads our characters into all manner of scrapes in pursuit of a bear. They must deal with a snow storm and a forest detour during the 50 minute-long jaunt, set to a score by Benji Bower.

A perfect mini-adventure for the family to enjoy together, We're Going in a Bear hunt has garnered excellent reviews wherever it has been.

It is for children aged three to eight. Tickets are £10, schools £8, family deals are available.

See www.whatsonmedway.co.uk or call the box office on 01634 338338 for more information or to book.



PETER PAN ON DINOSAUR ISLAND

Various dates in January, Kings Theatre, Chatham



SPOTLIGHTS bring this fantasy adventure to life, to introduce children to live theatre.

It's a pantomime with a difference as we join the boy who never grows up and his nemesis the dastardly pirate Captain Hook after they are catapulted back through a time vortex to a prehistoric version of their home Neverland.

The pair will resume their epic battle, dodge dinosaurs like T-Rex and velocoraptors and wonder how they will return to their own time.

The show is designed for children aged five to 12 and the audience takes an integral part in this immersive interactive experience for children.

With most pantomimes, only one or two children can come onto the stage, but with Spotlights, everyone who wants to can take part.

This year the audience will be hunting pirates, flying with Wendy and the pterodactyl to rescue dino eggs, bombarding Captain Hook with dinosaur droppings and ambushing pirates with real swords.

If it is your birthday then you could meet Peter Pan during the show too.

To book tickets call 01634 829468 or visit www.spotlights.co.uk.

Tickets cost £6.50 adults, £5.50 for children or £22 for a family ticket (two adults and two children or one adult and three children).



COMEDY NIGHT WITH PHIL NICHOL

Wednesday, January 5, Hazlitt Arts Centre, Maidstone



A CONSUMATE comedy performer, Phil Nichol tickles funnybones wherever he goes and is truly unique.

An acclaimed actor, award winning comedian, producer, presenter, writer and musician – there is no end to the man's talents, so stop by for this show at the Maidstone theatre.

Phil is an energetic and exciting performer with an unquenchable thirst to break boundaries and innovate. His skill as an improviser whether it be musical, comedy or straight is unparalleled.

With a surreal edge to some of his mischievous rantings, Nichol always brings something new to the stage, his keen sense of fun and eye for the shocking and absurd has cemented his position as one of the best comedians on the circuit today.

His assured and award-winning performances in his theatrical work have attracted critical accolades and see him in great demand as an actor.

This show takes place in the centre's Exchange Studio, at 8pm and is a great way to begin the new year. Tickets, for over 18s only, are priced at £10.

For tickets call the box office on 01622 758611 or visit www.hazlittartscentre.co.uk for more details.

WIN a wonderful weekend in Boulogne sur Mer

with The France Show 2011

14 - 16 January 2011 | Earls Court London

We've teamed up with **The France Show 2011** to give you the chance to win three nights for two people in Boulogne sur Mer. You'll travel with P&O from Dover to Calais, drive 40 minutes to Boulogne and stay in the 19th century mansion L'Enclus de l'Évêché, the perfect base to explore the rich culture and history of Boulogne and the surrounding area.

Once settled, you'll begin a weekend packed with activities: choose from sand yachting, tennis, horse riding or a visit to Nausica, the National Sea Centre. You'll be offered an Aquagym session, a visit to Boulogne Castle, and a relaxing massage. Once you've built up an appetite you'll enjoy a gastronomic treat at Terrasses de l'Enclus.

To prepare you for your getaway you'll also receive a VIP visit for two to **The France Show 2011**, including wine tasting and lunch within the show's Mim Plaisir restaurant.

At the show you can shop in the largest **French market** outside of France; taste and buy **artisan produce**; learn from the experts in **culinary demonstrations**, **tutored wine tastings** and **language classes**; get ideas and unique offers from **regional tourist offices** and **travel specialists** and discover your **dream property**, with 1000s to choose from. See more at www.thefranceshow.com.

Five runners up will also receive a pair of tickets to the show.

TO ENTER: send your answer to kentnews@kormedia.co.uk with the subject: **France Show Competition**. Alternatively answers on a postcard to: France Show Competition, KOS Media, Apple Barn, Smethth, Ashford, Kent TN25 6BR. Include your name, address and telephone number.

Q. What is the name of P&O's newest ship?

- A) Spirit of Dover
- B) Spirit of Britain
- C) Spirit of Calais

The closing date for entries is 11th January 2011. For our full terms and conditions please visit www.kentnews.co.uk.



Boulogne sur Mer

For more information about events in Boulogne and the area: tourisme@agde-boulonnais.fr www.tourisme-boulonnais.com

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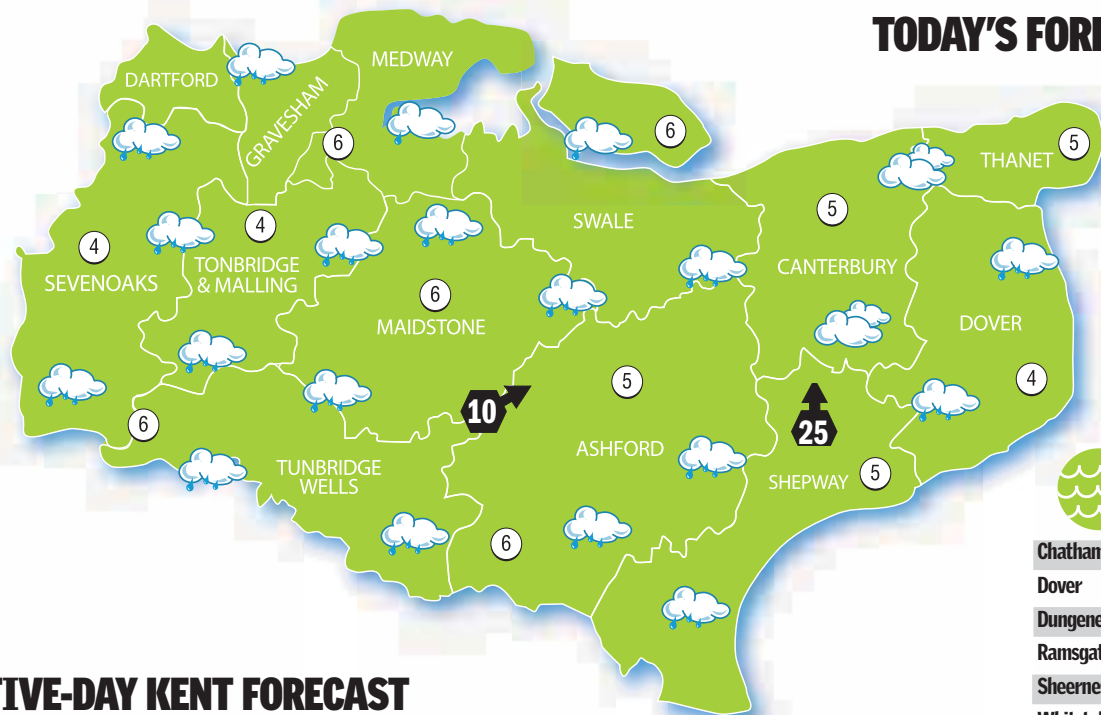
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AROUND THE WORLD YESTERDAY

Amsterdam	2°C	Madrid	8°C
Athens	14°C	New York	11°C
Barcelona	7°C	Paris	3°C
Beijing	-3°C	Rome	10°C
Bombay	30°C	Sydney	21°C
Cape Town	30°C	Tenerife	20°C
Cardiff	0°C	Tokyo	8°C
Gibraltar	17°C	Vancouver	2°C
Hong Kong	11°C	Warsaw	-3°C
Las Palmas	21°C	Wellington	21°C



KENT'S WEEKEND HIGH TIDES

Chatham	Saturday	3:16pm 5.8m	Sunday	3:49pm 5.6m
Dover	Saturday	1:23pm 6.2m	Sunday	1:58pm 6.1m
Dungeness	Saturday	1:22pm 7.1m	Sunday	1:58pm 7.0m
Ramsgate	Saturday	1:53pm 4.8m	Sunday	2:28pm 4.6m
Sheerness	Saturday	3:06pm 5.5m	Sunday	3:39pm 5.4m
Whitstable	Saturday	3:05pm 5.0m	Sunday	3:40pm 5.0m

FIVE-DAY KENT FORECAST

	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon															
Ashford	5°C	7°C	6°C	7°C	8°C	Dover	4°C	5°C	6°C	7°C	7°C	Gravesend	6°C	7°C	6°C	8°C	8°C	Sevenoaks	4°C	5°C
Canterbury	4°C	5°C	6°C	8°C	7°C	Faversham	5°C	6°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Maidstone	5°C	6°C	6°C	7°C	8°C	Sittingbourne	5°C	6°C
Chatham	5°C	6°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Folkestone	4°C	5°C	6°C	7°C	7°C	Ramsgate	4°C	5°C	6°C	8°C	7°C	Tonbridge	5°C	7°C
Dartford	6°C	7°C	6°C	8°C	8°C	Gillingham	5°C	6°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Rochester	5°C	6°C	6°C	9°C	7°C	Tun Wells	5°C	7°C



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POWERED BY KOS MEDIA

A year of films to engage your brain

■ BY DAMON SMITH

ORIGINALITY has been a very rare commodity on the big screen this year.

It's no surprise that in a summer cluttered with remakes Christopher Nolan's mind-bending thriller *Inception* stood out from the crowd, asking us to unravel layer upon layer of mystery in a world of fractured dreams.

The rest of the summer was largely forgettable, punctuated by abysmal revamps of *A Nightmare On Elm Street* and *Clash Of The Titans*, the latter inducing headaches with its shoddily executed 3D.

Thankfully, Will Smith's son Jaden kicked his way into our affections in the new *Karate Kid* opposite Jackie Chan in heartbreaking form as the sensei haunted by tragedy.

Intentional laughter was in short supply, especially from homegrown film-makers. The *Infidel* and *Burke & Hare* were hopelessly misconceived, while Ricky Gervais didn't impress with *Cemetery Junction*.

David Fincher's history lesson about Facebook, *The Social Network*, was a triumph of directorial brio over emotion, and paled next to the low budget documentary *Catfish* on the very same topic.

It was a vintage year for animated feature films though – three are recognised in our top 10 – whether it was hand drawn (*The Illusionist*), computer animated (*Despicable Me*, *Megamind*), stop-motion (*A Town Called Panic*) or Disney's first ever African-American princess kissing a frog.

While many people expected *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows: Part 1* to sweep all before it at the box office, 2010 belonged not to the young wizards from Hogwarts but the computer animated wizards at Pixar, who took us to infinity and beyond one last time...

1. Toy Story 3 (released July 19)

For the first time, the highest grossing film at the UK box office is also the finest feature of the past 12 months, proving that quality can walk hand-in-hand with mainstream appeal.

The animators at Pixar bid a tearful farewell to the denizens of Andy's toy chest with a brilliantly paced escape from the seemingly idyllic Sunnyside day care centre and its strawberry-fragraned despot, *Lots-o'-Huggin' Bear*.

Director Lee Unkrich doesn't strike a single false note, from the breathless opening sequence to a heartbreaking finale that reduces grown men to gibbering wrecks.

2. Lebanon (May 14)

Shot from the perspective of a four-strong team of men within a rattling, battle-scarred tank during the First Lebanon War, Samuel Maoz's bravura depiction of war is a master class in sustained tension.

The heat in the claustrophobic confines of the tank is stifling as the actors put them-

MASTERPIECES:
Colin Firth is George in *A Single Man*, below *Lots-o-Huggin' Bear*, Rex, Mrs. Potato Head, Bullseye, Mr. Potato Head, Jessie, Woody, Hamm, Buzz Lightyear, Slinky Dog, Barbie and Ken star in *Toy Story 3*



selves through the emotional wringer to portray men living on frayed nerves. Stunning, naturalistic performances leave us gasping for breath, praying desperately for an end to the bloodshed.

3. Winter's Bone (September 17)

Debra Granik's bleak character study begs obvious comparisons with *Frozen River*, dealing with a tenacious female protagonist who must risk everything to rescue her fractured family from the brink of financial ruin.

Twenty-year-old Jennifer Lawrence could become the youngest winner of the Oscar for her tour-de-force lead performance as teenager Ree, who has been left in charge of her siblings while their wastrel father skips bail.

Lawrence is mesmerising, weathering each emotional body blow with courage far beyond her years. Granik eschews sentimentality at every turn, leaving us to wince in horror as Ree's search reaches a nerve-racking climax.

4. The Kids Are All Right (October 29)

Lisa Cholodenko's bittersweet and touching comedy is blessed with arguably the finest ensemble cast of the year, led by Annette Bening and Julianne Moore in dazzling and Oscar-worthy form as lesbian couple Nic and Jules, whose carefully ordered life goes into

tailspin when their teenage children secretly make contact with their sperm donor father.

Cholodenko's script, co-written by Stuart Blumberg, is razor sharp and her dissection of the tensions between the family members is painfully funny.

5. A Single Man (February 12)

Colin Firth should have won an Academy Award for his stunning portrayal of a gay professor torn apart by grief.

In Tom Ford's directorial debut, he is utterly fearless as 1960s English professor George, who contemplates suicide rather than live another day with the loss of his soul mate.

Fashion designer Ford recreates the mood of the era with the same attention to detail that he brings to his menswear collections.

6. Precious: Based on the Novel Push by Sapphire (January 29)

Lee Daniels' harrowing account of a 16-year-old girl coming of age in a violent and abusive household in 1980s Harlem is not for the faint of heart, punctuated by scenes of cruelty that make your blood run cold.

Yet, no matter how much we want to turn away from the screen in horror, the incredible resolve of our heroine keeps us willing her on.

7. Dogtooth (April 23)

Yorgos Lanthimos' disturbing film is undoubtedly an acquired taste, but once you succumb to the Greek's fiercely original and daring vision, *Dogtooth* lingers in the memory.

The story unfolds in a secluded compound where a middle-aged father and mother raise their grown-up son and two daughters in a bubble of childhood innocence.

The adults reward good deeds with stickers and even convince the youngsters that cats are man-eating beasts. When father invites work colleague Christina into the compound to sate his son's sexuality, the balance of power shifts with shocking consequences.

8. Mary & Max (October 22)

Writer-director Adam Elliot's extraordinary stop-motion animated comedy chronicles an

unlikely long distance friendship that helps two lost souls find hope.

Recounted with biting wit by narrator Barry Humphreys, the film introduces Mary Dinkle, an alienated Australian girl who becomes a pen pal to New York malcontent Max Horowitz.

Elliot's script is littered with droll one-liners, but the laughter never detracts from the uncomfortable honesty of the characters' stories, which draw them together in their darkest hours of loneliness and despair.

9. How to Train Your Dragon (March 31)

Dean DeBlois and Chris Sanders' computer animated fantasy explores the bond between a misunderstood boy and a supposedly fearsome dragon, based on the book by Cressida Cowell.

It's a familiar rites of passage story but the directors enliven the narrative with gorgeous visuals, vertiginous flying sequences that are nothing short of breathtaking in 3D, and hysterical comic interludes.

Jay Baruchel milks every ounce of our sympathy as the weedy hero, a young Viking called Hiccup, who finds a kindred spirit in an injured dragon called Toothless. The relationship between man and beast is at the beating heart of the film.

10. The Millennium Trilogy (March 12/August 27/November 26)

Swedish actress Noomi Rapace exploded into public consciousness as computer hacker Lisbeth Salander in the hard-hitting film versions of Stieg Larsson's best-selling novels.

Director Niels Arden Oplev lit the fuse at the beginning of the year with *The Girl With The Dragon Tattoo*, dispatching Lisbeth and her partner in crime-fighting, journalist Mikael Blomkvist, on a search for a missing girl.

Their investigations continued in the next two films, both directed by Daniel Alfredson. Punctuated by scenes of gruesome and graphic violence, the *Millennium* trilogy is a milestone in modern Scandinavian cinema.

Hollywood has clearly taken note – David Fincher's English language remake of the first film opens on Boxing Day next year. Pray he doesn't ruin it.



MOTORS NEWS



Impressive hybrid is set to conquer all for Lexus

LEXUS claims class leading ownership savings for its all-new CT 200h hybrid.

The petrol-electric executive hatchback arrives in January priced from £21,287 and offers the lowest (10 per cent) benefit-in-kind company car tax, a 100 per cent first year write-down allowance against corporation tax and a potential average of around 70mpg.

Lexus also says the car's road tax exempt low emission hybrid drivetrain cuts scheduled service, maintenance and repair costs to deliver cheaper ownership for private owners and company car drivers and operators.



Antara bouncing back with a sharp makeover

THERE was nothing much wrong with the Vauxhall Antara until you saw the price – from nearly £23,000.

It made you look too hard for flaws rather than at how smart and well made this SUV (sports utility vehicle) was.

But a revitalised Antara goes on sale in January from under £20,000, with sharper looks inside and out and a choice of two newer and better diesel engines.

The price cut is not all it seems though – the entry model has front-wheel drive rather than 4x4.



Premium upgrades add touch of class for Saab

SAAB has announced premium upgrades to Vector SE versions of its smart new 9-5 executive saloon.

The Swedish marque now offers these models with leather seats as standard, and, mindful of the need to rebuild its aura in the tough executive sector, has ditched the slightly underwhelming 17-inch alloys in favour of 18-inchers that suit the car's looks better.

All 2.0-litre TiD 160PS (158bhp) diesel models with manual transmission also now get a revised comfort chassis set-up.



PACKING A PUNCH: Mercedes' impressive C-Class Estate has a blend of good handling and ride quality – something rival manufacturers can match on the first, but not the latter

Mercedes-Benz junior load lugger a class act

MERCEDES-BENZ created the upmarket German estate car sector with the venerable W123 (1976-1985) – forerunner to the E-Class model dynasty.

They are still a common sight – a tribute to their usefulness, appeal and enduring class.

A smaller, but no less impressive successor, is the C-Class Estate (from £25,195)

The styling is crisp and sporty whether you opt for the 'classic' models, with their three-pointed star mounted on top of the radiator grille, or for the Sport versions with the brand badge centred in a wide M-B coupé-style grille.

Then there is the latest C-Class blend of good handling and ride quality – its obvious rivals deliver on the first, but cannot match the latter.

And virtually the whole estate range has eco-friendly credentials, which M-B labels BlueEfficiency – a series of tweaks to save fuel and emissions including low rolling resistance tyres, aerodynamic tucks and revised powertrains. Unlike some carmakers, the 'greening' has not been reflected by higher prices though.

In fact, though I was highly impressed with

ROAD TEST

MERCEDES C-CLASS ESTATE

BY STEVE LOADER

STAR QUALITY

Driving appeal	★★★★★
Image	★★★★★
Space	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Running costs	★★★★★
Reliability	★★★★★
Green rating	★★★★★

the C250 CDI Sport auto model as tested, I was rather taken aback by the £33,105 pricing.

Nevertheless, I can imagine someone being seduced by the car's easy capability and class and second-hand values are robust, so you would get lots of your investment back.

The 200bhp 2,143cc four-cylinder diesel engine is smooth and the five-speed automatic gearbox seamless; there is enough power here to enjoy the balanced rear-wheel drive chassis that runs the BMW 3-Series close for handling and driving enjoyment.

Sport spec does bring a slightly tauter chassis setting, but ride quality is still excellent considering the payback in driver enjoyment.

As ever, the cabin is typical Merc, being robust rather than flashy, with good seats and sensible controls.

The big seller though, and rightly so if paying extra for the estate version, is the cleverness of the load area; the space is generous and one of the best at this level.

But it is the practicality of that space that is impressive, with minimal intrusion from the wheelarches, a low loading sill and a practical upright rear end that is cleverly disguised by a roofline that appears to sweep down.



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£5000**

Vehicle price £5000, Deposit £500, amount to finance £4500, First payment of £189.00, followed by 58 payments of £104.09 per month and a Final payment of £253.09 Total amount payable £6479.31 Apr 16.4%



**VW Beetle
£5995**

Vehicle price £5995, Deposit £500, amount to finance £5495, First Payment £189.00, followed by 58 payments of £126.85 per month and a Final payment of £275.85 Total amount payable £7822.15 Apr 15.8%



**Renault Clio
£5495**

Vehicle Price £5495, Deposit £500, amount to finance £4995, First payment of £189.00, followed by 58 payments of £115.41 per month and a Final payment of £264.41, Total amount payable £7147.19, Apr 16.1%



**Vauxhall Corsa
£4495**

Vehicle Price £4495, Deposit £250, amount to finance £4245, First Instalments of £189, followed by 58 payments of £98.25 per month and a Final Payment of £247.25, Total amount payable £6134.75, Apr 16.6%



**VW Polo
£7000**

Vehicle price £7000, Deposit £500, amount to finance £6500, First Instalments of £189 followed by 58 payments of £149.85 per month with a final payment of £298.85. Total Amount Payable £9179.15 Apr 15.3%



**Renault Megane
£3995**

Vehicle Price £3995, Deposit of £250 amount to be financed is £3745, First Payment of £189 followed by 46 payments of £103.12 per month and a final payment of £252.12, Total amount payable £5184.64 Apr 18.2%



**Ford Focus
£6495**

Vehicle Price £6495, Deposit of £500, Amount to Finance £5995, first payment of £189 followed by 58 payments of £138.29 per month and a final payment of £287.29, Total amount payable £8497.11 Apr 15.5%



**Citroen C2
£4495**

Vehicle Price £4495, deposit £250, amount to finance £4245, first payment of £189 followed by 58 payments of £98.25 per month and a final payment of £247.25, total amount payable £6134.75 Apr 16.6%



**Fiat Punto
£4995**

Vehicle price £4495 deposit of £500, amount to finance £4495, first payment of £189 followed by 58 payments of £103.97 per month and a final payment of £252.97. Total amount payable £6472.23 Apr 16.4%



**Ford KA
£4250**

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Loading door, CD, Ply Lined, White



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Alloys, Met Blue



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05 55 Volvo V50 2.4 SE
Semi-Auto Est, 1 owner, 59k mls, FDSH, AC, Cruise,
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CD, leather, alloys, Met Blue



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PROPERTY NEWS

Proposal for agencies to combine property data

NATIONAL Statistician Jil Matheson is recommending a single headline measure of house prices be introduced to prevent confusion across the market.

Ms Matheson, the Government's chief adviser on official statistics, conducted a review into official housing data following concerns from people who monitor house prices from various indices.

Currently, there are two official house price indexes; one published by the Land Registry and one published by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).

It has been suggested the DCLG and the Land Registry work together on the possibility of producing a joint statistical report containing a headline house price index.

In addition, the Halifax and the Nationwide produce their own house prices indexes each month – which are commonly used.

Ms Matheson said: "There is a great deal of interest in and importance placed on changes in the value of our houses by all sections of society."

"I want to be sure official statistics producers are providing the right statistics on house prices to support decision making by us all."

Survey reveals drop in amount of empty homes

THE number of private homes which have been empty for at least six months has fallen for the first time in three years, a survey has revealed.

The Halifax Empty Homes Survey showed there were 295,519 vacant homes in England – down from 316,056 a year ago.

However, it highlighted that levels of deprivation and high unemployment were typically higher in areas with a high proportion of vacant properties.

The Halifax says the latest figures mean that 1.6 per cent of all privately-owned properties in England were empty.

Suren Thiru, of the Halifax, said: "It is encouraging the number of long-term empty private homes has fallen, reversing the increases recorded over the preceding two years."

"Nonetheless, it is concerning that the problem of empty homes remains substantial in a number of areas."

Properties are classed as being empty if they have been vacant for more than six months because they are between occupants, undergoing modernisation, in disrepair, or awaiting demolition.



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GOING DOWN: House prices are forecast to fall by about two per cent this year, but could be worse if the Government's new austerity measures hamper the economic recovery

■ BY NICK AMES

THE Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) has indicated house prices could fall by about two per cent in the next 12 months.

However, the institution highlights the fall could be much more severe if the Government's austerity measures hamper the economic recovery.

Many reports have pointed to a cooling housing market with continuous falls in mortgage approvals.

In addition, HM Revenue & Customs revealed a slump in the number of homes sold in November in the UK.

According to HMRC, 77,000 homes worth at least £40,000 or more were sold in the month – down from the 80,000 sold in October and 6,000 fewer than in November last year.

Experts have suggested the housing market will remain subdued in 2011, due to uncertainty surrounding the economy and the ongoing mortgage-rationing by lenders.

Over recent times, demand for housing has been weak as many buyers have adopted a 'wait and see' approach as uncertainty continues to surround the economy and the spending cuts make prospective buyers cautious.

House prices have also come under pressure as new instructions continue to outstrip buyer demand as property has been losing value since late summer after a recovery in the latter half of 2009.

Economic uncertainty promises a subdued 2011 housing market

Simon Rubinsohn, chief economist at RICS, said: "A key risk is the economy performs more poorly than we currently envisage."

"It is conceivable that the fall-out from the programme of public spending cuts could be greater, with the jobless total rising in a more market fashion."

Meaningful

"In these circumstances, it is likely the appetite of those considering making a purchase in the residential sector could turn out to be rather weaker than we currently anticipate."

Unemployment is expected to rise sharply over the next couple of years, reaching the three million mark next year, according to experts.

Mr Rubinsohn said: "There are sufficient reasons to doubt there will any meaningful improvement in the flow of mortgage finance over the coming 12 months."

"Moreover, it is not difficult to go one stage further and conclude that the balance between the debt and equity requirement for house-buyers has changed for the foreseeable future, if not for good."

"In this environment we find it hard to believe that sales activity in the residential market will be very much higher in 2011 than in 2010."

Vicky Redwood, an economist at Capital Economics, said: "The recovery in the UK labour market appears to be flagging even before the public-sector job cuts have really started."

Vacant property conversion cheaper alternative

LANDLORDS who are thinking about expanding and taking out a buy-to-let insurance policy may wish to consider what empty properties can offer.

David Ireland, chief executive of independent charity Empty Homes, said there should be more of a drive by the Government to

ensure such dwellings are put back into use, because housing demand is very high.

"The house-building rates at the moment are as low as they have been since the 1920s, so any other way you can provide homes has got to be very, very important," he said.

Mr Ireland said that converting vacant

homes was generally easier, cheaper and less environmentally damaging than constructing new properties.

He added it is essential every other possibility is looked at when house building is so low and refurbishing empty dwellings is a fairly obvious option.

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GRAND PLAN: Oliver Ash (right) with his fellow directors

Artificial plan to make ground the real deal

PLANS for Maidstone United's new ground at James Whatman Way will include an artificial 3G surface in an attempt to secure the long-term future of the club.

The Stones must raise £1.6 million before construction work can begin and club bosses are hopeful of attracting investors with their vision of a community-based facility.

Director Oliver Ash said the decision to include the synthetic pitch had only been taken after months of discussions, and admitted there were still obstacles to be overcome before Maidstone could return to play in the town.

FOOTBALL

He told the club's website: "This is a daunting amount [of money], but we have to be positive and see the glass half full; if we can raise this money and build the ground, then the club should be able to run profitably in the long run."

"There are lots of arguments in favour of this pitch, but I like the one about the fact the community teams and supporters will become much more part of the club, sharing the facilities."

"This in itself could well attract investors who want to feel they are contributing to a good cause and not just a first-team."

"There is only one very good argument against – the problem of promotion being blocked. My reply is that we will lobby like crazy to change the rules over the next few years and to even imagine promotion yet is being wildly optimistic."

The club expects to present its proposals to potential investors by the middle of January, with plans to channel revenue generated by hiring out the 3G pitch into the squad and stadium development.

FOOTBALL



GONE: Cumberbatch only played once for Stones

United bring in new faces for fightback

MAIDSTONE United have added to their squad with the signings of Aiden Sherlock and Michael Phillips.

The cold snap in December may well have postponed games, but it failed to stop Stones boss Andy Ford's transfer plans with the arrival of two new faces.

The Ryman Premier League side are struggling in the bottom half of the division and are in need of a boost.

Ford has wasted little time during the festive period and believes the signings of Phillips and Sherlock will be key for United's start to 2011.

Former Hastings United and Tonbridge Angels man Phillips is an experienced central midfielder, while 18-year-old defender Sherlock joins on-loan from Conference South club Ebbsfleet United.

Ford said: "We are not overly blessed with midfielders so Michael should help us out in that department. He is good on the ball and he should be able to help create chances for people."

"I spoke to ex-Hastings manager Tony Dolby and others who have worked with him and had heard good reports."

"Aiden plays in a position in which we need to strengthen and hopefully both Maidstone, Ebbsfleet and, of course, the player will get a mutual benefit from this loan deal. Aiden will experience regular first-team football, whilst we get a strong addition to our squad."

While Ford hopes the capture of Phillips and Sherlock will boost the club's hopes of moving away from the relegation zone, he has decided to release three players.

Central defenders Marc Cumberbatch and Nick Davis, who have both been suffering from long-term injuries, have joined Horsham YMCA and Thamesmead Town respectively.

Midfielder Joe Goldsmith has left the club to play for Ryman South side Eastbourne Town.



UNDER PRESSURE: Tom Parkinson (left) and striker Paul Vines (right) were part of a disappointing Maidstone team that have now gone seven games without a win in all competitions



Picture: STEVE TERVET

Ford rips into players as Stones show lack of fight

MAIDSTONE United manager Andy Ford admitted his players lacked passion, desire and acceptable fitness levels in their dismal defeat to Kent rivals Margate on Bank Holiday Monday.

The Stones created almost nothing in the way of clear-cut opportunities and the visitors were able to comfortably hold onto a slender lead until former Maidstone striker James Pinnock netted in stoppage-time to seal their fate.

Ford revealed angry words had been exchanged in the home dressing room after the final whistle and said he now faced a tougher task than the one he anticipated when he took the job as Peter Nott's successor.

"I thought we were very poor and I think we've gone backwards a little bit," he said.

"What I can't accept is a lack of passion and desire – they looked more hungry than us. I've told them a few home truths, so whether they take it on board or not is down to them."

"I'm afraid the rot has set in from pre-season; we're not fit. I'm asking some of the midfield

FOOTBALL

■ BY STEVE TERVET

Maidstone United 0

Margate 2

Welford 18 pen, Pinnock 90



Maidstone United starting XI



Subs used: Johnson (Phillips 20), Sherlock (Parkinson 46), Whitnell (Richmond 70)

there's too many changes going on at the minute. I just feel like I'm putting fires out at the moment because there's a lot of rot there and it's trying to get that out slowly without the building falling down."

"Passion, heart, desire and hunger – I didn't see too much of that, I'm afraid, and that's what worries me more. I feel like wringing their necks and telling them to get lost and then get some more players in."

Maidstone return to action with a trip to Hastings United on Saturday having now gone seven games without a win in all competitions.

PLEASE SEND YOUR SPORTS STORIES TO SPORTS EDITOR GLENN PEARSON AT glenn.pearson@kosmedia.co.uk



Bulls hope title ambitions stand up to sternest test

RUGBY

BY TOM HOWARD

AYLESFORD Bulls hope to reignite their London 2 South East title challenge when they travel to league leaders Old Elthamians on Saturday.

The Bulls have been one of the surprise packages in the division this season and sit in fourth position having recorded six wins and only two defeats.

However, the outcome of the weekend's clash against Old Elthamians could go some way in deciding the club's title ambitions.

The freezing temperatures experienced in the county last month wiped out all rugby fixtures, which has left Glynn Mitchell's side without a competitive fixture since the 34-5 victory against Old Dunstonians on November 20. The Bulls will have to put that to the back of their minds as they look to topple a side they have already beaten at home this term.

Bulls coach Neil Wiltshire said: "It's a big game. They are top of the league and will also have the advantage of playing a game last weekend against Blackheath in the cup.

"Our coach went to the game and he is relatively confident we can beat them again, although it will be a tougher game at their place. "We have just got to keep doing what we have been doing in the first half of the season.



NEIGHBOURS: Aylesford Bulls (left) face the league leaders Old Elthamians, while Maidstone (right) take on Sevenoaks

"We have been playing well in games and getting results. The only concern is coping with all the rearrangements as we have no free weekends left."

Neighbours Maidstone could do the Bulls' a favour if they could overcome title rivals Sevenoaks on Saturday.

The club have also been stuck on the sidelines due to the poor weather and are eager to return to the field. After a 24-14 victory against Sevenoaks at The Mote earlier in the season, Andy Foley's side will be looking to clinch a double.

The Maidstone coach said: "I think everybody is in the same boat when it comes to match



Picture: MARTIN WATSON/BOB HARTON

practice so in some ways it will be like the start of the season again. I know Sevenoaks very well and they are a good side. I tipped them to achieve promotion this season, but we beat them earlier in the season so they will be looking for revenge."

After a torrid couple of years on the field culminating in relegation from London 1 South last season, Foley is confident his side will end this campaign on a much more positive note.

He said: "I think the target for us is to try and finish in the top-four or five. Maidstone have had a trying history of late so it is just a case of getting the players winning and enjoying playing again."

LEAGUE TABLE

(Before Monday's fixture)

RYMAN PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	Gd	Pt
1 Sutton United	20	12	6	2	+19	42
2 Cray Wanderers	21	11	4	6	+20	37
3 Bury Town	18	10	5	3	+8	35
4 Kingstonian	18	10	3	5	+10	33
5 AFC Hornchurch	19	9	6	4	+7	33
6 Carshalton Athletic	20	9	3	8	+9	30
7 Lowestoft Town	15	8	5	2	+13	29
8 Concord Rangers	18	8	5	5	+6	29
9 Billericay Town	18	8	5	5	+1	29
10 Harrow Borough	18	8	3	7	+3	27
11 Hendon	15	7	5	3	+9	26
12 Canvey Island	18	6	7	5	+5	25
13 Tonbridge Angels	17	7	4	6	+3	25
14 Wealdstone	20	6	5	9	-4	23
15 Tooting & Mit' Utd	22	5	8	9	-14	23
16 Margate	19	5	6	8	-1	21
17 Horsham	19	5	5	9	-15	20
18 Hastings United	20	4	6	10	-7	18
19 Folkestone Invicta	18	3	6	9	-12	15
20 Maidstone United	19	2	8	9	-13	14
21 Aveyley	18	3	4	11	-16	13
22 Croydon Athletic	20	3	3	14	-31	12

FIXTURES (Saturday): Ryman League Premier Division:

Hastings United v Maidstone United



Picture: MALLY WALTERS

IN TANDEM: Tim Reeves (left) will hope to improve on his runners-up place in the World Championship

Reeves focused on sidecar glory

SIDECAR racer Tim Reeves will return to the British Superbike paddock for the 2011 season following changes to the sport's schedule.

The three-time world champion, from Watlington, is set to defend his British Sidecar Championship (BSC) which will now become part of the support package for the British Superbike Championship (BSB).

The decision means Reeves is due to compete for honours at four BSB meetings, which should help raise the sport's profile.

The BSC returns to Brands Hatch on April 25, and will also have further run-outs at Knockhill (June 19), Donington Park (September 11) and Silverstone (September 25).

BSB race director, Stuart Higgs, said: "The sidecar community have done an incredible job rebuilding the profile of the unique discipline and spectacle that they are.

"The reinstatement of a true British

MOTORSPORT

Championship is well deserved and they will be a major attraction at the four BSB events where they will appear in 2011."

After yet another successful season, sidecar ace Reeves will have to wait until April to return to the track.

The 38-year-old will be looking for a fourth world title after finishing runner-up in last year's World Championship, just six points behind eventual winner Pekka Paivarinta.

Two fourth-place finishes in the opening round of the campaign at Le Mans ultimately cost him the world crown.

Reeves is expected to receive the 2010 BSC trophy later this month at a formal reception held at The Inn On The Lake Hotel in Gravesend on January 29.

ATHLETICS



Picture: IAN KIRK

HOPE: Coleman (in red) narrowly missed out last year

Athletics club banks on more success at Kent championships

A STRONG contingent from Medway and Maidstone Athletic Club will head to the Kent County Cross Country Championships this weekend expecting to come home with some silverware.

The event is the first big championship of the cross-country season and has this year been switched from Detling Hill to Wilmington Grammar School in Dartford.

As ever the club's best chance of success in the individual and team prizes on Saturday comes with the senior men and women.

Medway and Maidstone have dominated the men's team event in recent years, but only took one of the trophies last season.

With Tonbridge expecting to send a very strong team their best hope is likely to come in individual glory.

Mike Coleman narrowly missed out on a seventh county title last year and after suffering with indifferent form over the last few months, he put down a marker by winning a 10k race in Harrietsham last weekend.

While anything more than that would be considered a bonus in the men's race, the club are expecting to figure prominently in the women's event.

Natalie Gray, fresh from helping Great Britain under-23s win team gold at the European Championships last month, is the class act in the field as she goes for a third successive Kent title.

Former county champions Louise Watson and Jenni Pereira may also figure at the front of the field.

There will also be a sizeable number of junior athletes competing, although Tonbridge are expected to dominate.

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